

ADVERSE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES (ACEs)

WHAT ARE ACEs?

Adverse childhood experiences, or ACEs, are potentially traumatic events that occur in childhood (0-17 years).

LIFE EXPECTANCY

People with six or more ACEs die nearly 20 years earlier on average than those without ACEs.

0 80 YEARS



6+ 60 YEARS



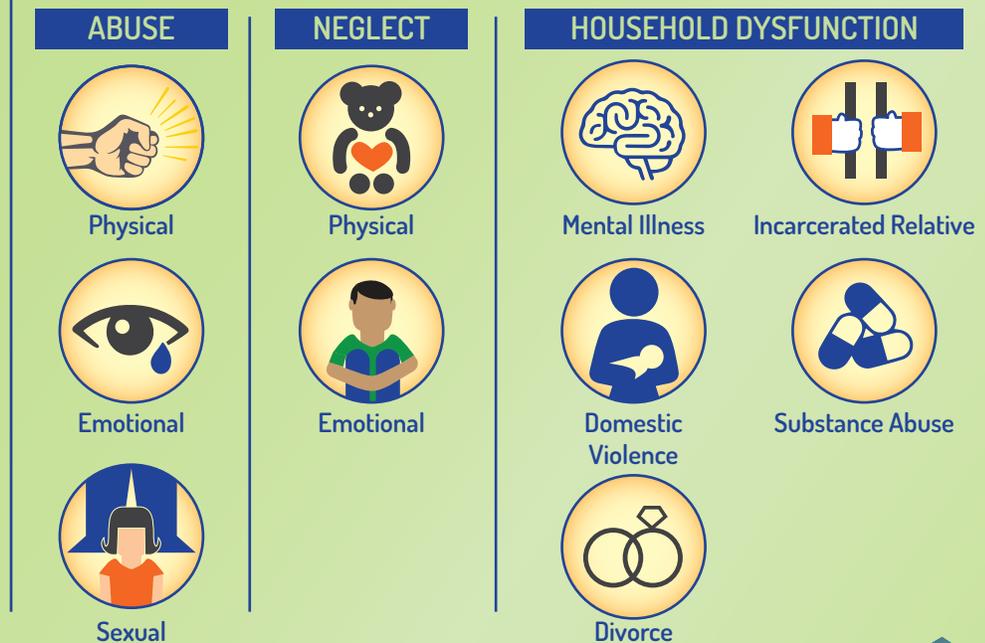
Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Adverse Childhood Experiences, 2019

WHAT IMPACT DO ACEs HAVE?

As the number of ACEs increases, so does the risk for negative health outcomes



THE 3 TYPES OF ACEs INCLUDE



1 in 6

1 in 6 adults experienced four or more ACEs.

5 of 10

At least 5 of the top 10 leading causes of death are associated with ACEs.

44%

Preventing ACEs could reduce the number of adults with depression by as much as 44%.

OVERVIEW

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) are potentially traumatic events that occur in childhood. ACEs can include violence, abuse, and growing up in a family with mental health or substance use problems. Also included are aspects of the child's environment that can undermine their sense of safety, stability, and bonding. However, ACEs can be prevented.

WHAT ARE THE CONSEQUENCES?

ACEs can have lasting, negative effects on health, well-being, and opportunity. These experiences can increase the risks of injury or suicide, sexually transmitted infections, maternal and child health problems, teen pregnancy, family and sexual violence, involvement in sex trafficking, and a wide range of chronic diseases (e.g., cancer, diabetes, and heart disease).

ACEs and associated conditions, such as living in under-resourced or racially segregated neighborhoods, frequently moving, and experiencing food insecurity, can cause toxic stress (extended or prolonged stress). Toxic stress from ACEs can change brain development and affect such things as attention, decision-making, and learning.

Children growing up with toxic stress may have difficulty forming healthy and stable relationships. They may also have unstable work histories as adults and struggle with finances, jobs, and depression throughout life. These effects can also be passed on to their own children. Some children may face further exposure to toxic stress from historical and ongoing traumas due to systemic racism or the impacts of poverty.

THE WAY FORWARD

HEALTH CARE PROVIDERS CAN:

- Anticipate and recognize current risk for ACEs in children and history of ACEs in adults. Refer patients to effective services and support.
- Link adults to family-centered approaches that include substance abuse treatment and parenting interventions.



EMPLOYERS CAN:

- Adopt and support family-friendly policies, such as paid family leave and flexible work schedules.



STATES AND COMMUNITIES CAN:

- Improve access to high-quality childcare by expanding eligibility, activities offered, and family involvement.
- Use effective social and economic supports that address financial hardship, limited educational opportunities, and other conditions that put families at risk for ACEs.
- Enhance connections to caring adults and increase opportunities to build skills for managing emotions and conflicts.



EVERYONE CAN:

- Recognize challenges that families face and offer support and encouragement to reduce stress.
- Support community programs and policies that provide safe and healthy conditions for all children and families.



RAISING AWARENESS ABOUT ACEs CAN HELP

- Change how people think about the causes of ACEs and who could help prevent them.
- Shift the focus from individual responsibility to community solutions.
- Reduce stigma around seeking help with parenting challenges or for substance misuse, depression, or suicidal thoughts.
- Promote safe, stable, nurturing relationships and environments where children live, learn, and play.

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